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THE RAGTIMER

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1980

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THE RAGTIME SOCIETY

DEDICATED TO THE PRESERVATION OF CLASSICAL RAGTIME

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RAGTIME...

UNDER YOUR HAT

THE RAGTIME SOCIETY
INCORPORATED

is a non-profit corporation having the following objects:

To preserve classical ragtime music and to pursue such other activities as shall serve to maintain and develop interest in classical ragtime music and music related thereto.

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Editor - John Fairhead

The NOV/DEC issue of THE RAGTIMER is traditionally devoted to the annual Ragtime Society 'BASH' and this issue is no exception. Eight pages of photographs highlight this presentation, together with a complete listing of the Formal Program compiled by Society Director JOHN FAIRHEAD.

Approximately 300 members and guests once again descended on the CARA INN in Toronto for the October 18th weekend festivities, and judging from the appreciative response the many talented performers received, everyone enjoyed... 'living the ragtime life'.

This exhuberence was heightened by the presence of the delightful and endearing AMELIA LAMB, who - with JOE LAMB Jr. - gave further meaning to the word... nostalgia.

A special tip of the hat to Society Directors BILL McCROSTIE, who coordinated the 'BASH' weekend, and MARK WITTMANN, who anchored a contingent of skilled and knowledgeable M/C's, namely, JOHN ARPIN, DAVE JASEN and MIKE MONTGOMERY.

With this issue of THE RAGTIMER, we bring to an end our eighteenth year of service to the 'ragtime scene'. A year of change, a year of re-organization, a year perhaps characteristic of the times in which we live; but also a year of support and encouragement from YOU the members, and filled with the promise of new goals and activities.

A membership renewal form, indicating your membership status for 1981, is included with this issue of THE RAGTIMER.

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RECORD REVIEW

by
TEX
WYNDHAM

Sunflower 501 'ExtraOrdinary Ragtime', piano solos by John Hasse

Selections: Pine Apple Rag, The Thriller, Frog Legs Rag, Solace, Maple Leaf Rag, Alexander's Ragtime Band, Radiant Rag, That Demon Rag, Weeping Willow, Hot House Rag.

Available @ $5.98, plus $1.00 shipping for first Lp in order and 35¢ for each additional Lp (or $1.50 per Lp for first class mail), from Sunflower Records, P.O. Box 2025, Bloomington, Indiana 47402.

Hasse's rather restrained and academic interpretations, mostly per the scores with a few fills, fit best with the more tranquil, singing rags on his program, such as May Aufderheide's 'The Thriller' and Scott Joplin's 'Weeping Willow'. By contrast, he loosens up and swings out effectively on Paul Pratt's 'Hot House Rag', digging in with a kind of bite that should also have been applied to Joplin's 'Maple Leaf Rag' and James Scott's 'Frog Legs Rag', which come across as on the correct-but-mechanical side. For something out-of-the-way, John offers the first recording of Russell Smith's moderately-syncopated 'That Demon Rag' and his own cheerful, stompy 'Radiant Rag'. I would have preferred 'ExtraOrdinary Ragtime' to have more backbone and a little less ring in the acoustics, but Hasse hits all the notes, delivers them up to proper tempo, and emerges with a platter of about average appeal, probably principally to fans of the classically-oriented ragtime pianists.

* * *

OTMH 101 'Concert Time At Old Town Music Hall', by Bill Coffman and Kathy Craig

Personnel: Bill Coffman, Wurlitzer theater organ; Kathy Craig, piano.

Selections: Says My Heart, Under A Texas Moon - solos by Coffman; Swipesy Cakewalk, Romantic Rag, St. Louis Tickle - solos by Craig; Great Scott Rag, Original Rags, Weeping Willow, Harlem Rag, Something Doing, Palm Leaf Rag, Bohemia - duets.

Available from Old Town Music Hall, 140 Richmond Street, El Segundo, California 90245.

We won't dally over Coffman's two non-rag pop-organ solos here, but move right to Ms. Craig's three delicate-yet-percussive ragtime tracks, the published charts

sometimes filled out with right-hand echoes an octave up ('Swipesy Cakewalk') or left-hand runs and alternate-hands licks ('St. Louis Tickle'). Her gentle approach to her own flowing, pretty, bittersweet 'Romantic Rag' unfortunately carries over into several of the seven duets, where her rather predictable and uninspiring accompanying passages (the team usually switches lead at strain-end) are frequently overwhelmed by Coffman's more powerful and expressive instrument. 'Palm Leaf Rag' and 'Bohemia' are fine arrangements, with well-balanced interplay; yet, the best duets on OTMH 101 are nevertheless reworkings of Coffman's outstanding collaborations with Knocky Parker (see THE RAGTIMER, March/April and July/August 1979), to which the Coffman-Craig duo adds little. Standing alone, the theater organ-piano combination is relatively novel, and the special theater organ effects (drums, xylophone, marimba, etc.) are of decided interest in the potential added dimension they can provide to ragtime; still, 'Concert Time At Old Town Music Hall' is only marginally worthwhile, not as imaginative or refreshing as it ought to be.

* * *

Stomp Off S. O. S. 1002 'The Wizard Of The Keyboard', by Terry Waldo

Personnel: Terry Waldo, vocals (selections marked '*') and piano; Eddy Davis, banjo; Vince Giordano, tuba.

Selections: Magnetic Rag, *Don't Give Me No Goose For Christmas, The Watermelon Trust/Corsica Rag, *Cocaine Habit - solos by Waldo; Proctology, *If You Talk In Your Sleep, Exit Gloom, Mississippi Rag, A Bag Of Rags, The Charleston, Chevy Chase, *Sailin' Down The Chesapeake Bay - trios.

Available @ $7.98, plus $2.00 overseas, from Stomp Off Records, P. O. Box 342, Dept. L, York, Pennsylvania 17405.

If you say this is mostly a ragtime Lp, you'll be right, as all eight instrumentals are rags, raggy multi-theme piano numbers, or works of prominent ragtime composers, featuring Waldo's bright, two-handed piano incorporating a variety of crisp ragtime figures and a comfortable two-beat left hand. If you say it's mostly a jazz Lp, you'll be right too, as Davis' and Giordano's deft accompaniment adds the punch and polyphony of a jazz trio and Terry personalizes the material with spontaneous-sounding rips, smears, walking bass, sudden breaks and other tasty improvisations. His program is an interesting collection of mostly unavailable-on-Lp material, such as his own funky 'Proctology', Jelly Roll Morton's unusual and newly-discovered 'Exit Gloom', W. R. McKanlass' hard-driving 'A Bag Of Rags', and the comedy relief of 'If You Talk In Your Sleep' and 'Don't Give Me No Goose For Christmas', leavened with some more familiar stuff (Joplin's usually stately 'Magnetic Rag' has rarely gone on such a swinging, down-homey ride). It is all very easy to take, informed in its interpretation, skillfully executed, well-recorded and recommended to most anyone in the ragtime or revivalist world (except maybe those few who have no time for anything not played strictly as written in an atmosphere of hushed reverence). Clearly the pick of the crop for today's column.

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SIXTEENTH ANNUAL RAGTIME SOCIETY 'BASH' (1980)

by John Fairhead

There's a familiarity about the annual Ragtime Society 'BASH' that at first glance, is alarming; you feel that it has all been done before. And yet, as the weekend unfolds, you realize that it is this very stable, recognizable structure, overlaid with ever-changing, unexpected, and occasionally bizarre musical contrasts... not unlike the syncopation of ragtime music itself... that creates the momentum and excitement experienced by those in attendance.

Logically, if this brief discourse was a review rather than a preamble to the 'Formal Program' listing, I would proceed to single out those performers and performances which appealed to my particular and sometimes peculiar tastes. However, the true spirit of the 'BASH' is participation, and to that end, ALL performers appealed to me.

A quick scan of the 'Program' will reveal one obvious ingredient of the 'BASH' ... an abundance of ragtime music. Not so obvious, but nevertheless a significant and positive aspect, is the opportunity it affords young musicians to 'rub shoulders' with the professionals. The Friday night, late Saturday night, and Sunday afternoon free-wheeling sessions, once again demonstrated this facet of the annual event.

The 1980 Ragtime Society 'BASH' is past, though not irretrievably past. By compiling the 'Formal Program' listing, and eight pages of photographs which follow, we've once again fashioned a miniature time capsule highlighting the weekend festivities. For those who attended the 'BASH', we believe that our pictorial presentation will revive a few pleasant memories, while those who were unable to attend, should still feel a sense of 'pseudo-participation'.

- FORMAL PROGRAM -

Masters of Ceremonies: JOHN ARPIN, DAVE JASEN, MIKE MONTGOMERY & MARK WITTMANN.

Note: All performances are piano solo unless otherwise designated.

GERRY VONDY	Thunderbolt Rag
Instrumental Group: DAN PARR (Piano), WILLIE WILSON (Banjo), WARREN LATHAM (Drums)	Maple Leaf Rag, and Pineapple Rag
BOB KIVIAHO	Lily Queen, and Red Pepper Rag
REIDE KAISER	French Pastry Rag, and Sugar Cane
ROSEMARY RENAUD	Good and Plenty Rag

RAINBOW GARDEN ORCHESTRA: WILLIE WILSON (Banjo), WARREN LATHAM (Baritone Sax), AL BIRD (Cornet), JACK MacKAY (Sax & Clarinet) JOYCE CORBYN (Piano)	I've Got A Feeling I'm Falling, Susie, and Thou Swell
JACK CUFF	Carolina Shout and Nagasaki
WAYNE ADAMS (Banjo), AUSTIN KITCHEN (Piano Accomp't)	Dance of the Bugs
GARY TENHUNEN	Ragdoll (Orig. Comp.)
BESS FELL	Black and White Rag, and Cum-Bac Rag
JEREMY FLEMING & BESS FELL (Piano Duet)	Champagne Rag

- SHORT INTERMISSION -

Musical POT-POURRI in the PEEL ROOM: Various performers and musical selections.

- DINNER INTERMISSION -

JACK PHELAN (Piano) & JIM MAZZY (Banjo)	Creole Belles, and Get Up Off of That Jazzophone
JACK HUTTON	Tricky Fingers A La J. S. Bach
GLORIA EKROM (Piano & Vocal)	My Colored Romeo, and Hamlet Was A Melancholy Dane
ROBBIE MONTGOMERY	Bethena Waltz
DANNY MONTGOMERY	Crush Collision March, and Russian Rag
ELIAS KAUFMAN (Banjo), AUSTIN KITCHEN (Piano Accomp't)	Somewhere In Dixie
AUSTIN KITCHEN	Eldorado Stomp (Orig. Comp.)
HELENA BOWKUN	My Pet, and Bohemia Rag
GEORGE FOLEY	Louisiana Rag, and Nickel In The Slot
JEAN & PAUL HULING "Sister Jean the Ragtime Queen & Laundry Fat" (Piano & Washboard)	Contentment Rag, and Laundry Fat Rag (Orig. Comp.)
KERRY PRICE GOWER (Piano & Vocal)	American Beauty Rag, Chevy Chase, and If You Don't Have Any Money
with WALT GOWER (Clarinet)	Old Fashioned Love
CHARLES BOOTY	Stomping in Texas, and K. C. On My Mind
MIKE MONTGOMERY	Birmingham Blues, and That Bull Frog Rag
with BESS FELL	Sheik of Araby Medley
DAVE JASEN	Smile When You Say It, Macadamian Scuffle (Orig. Comp.), Blooie Blooie, and Raymond's Rag (Orig. Comp.)
JOHN ARPIN	Walter Donaldson Medley, Original Rags, and Ragtime Nightingale

Presentation to AMELIA LAMB by MARK WITTMANN

- END OF FORMAL PROGRAM -

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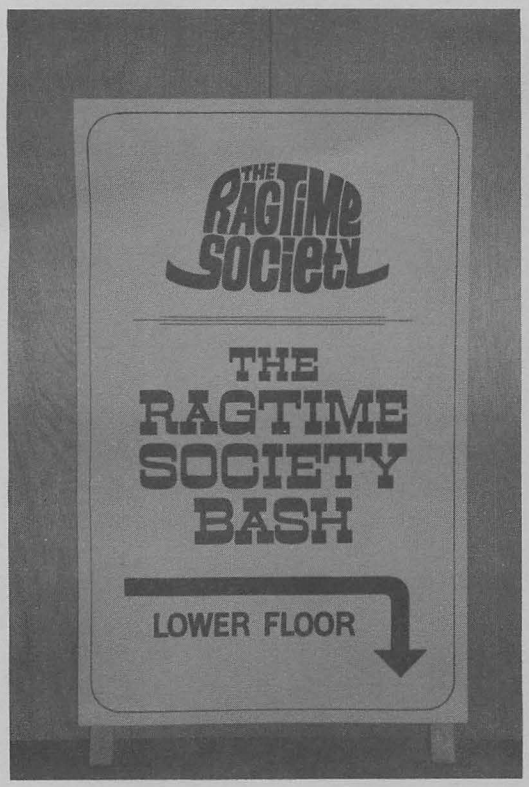
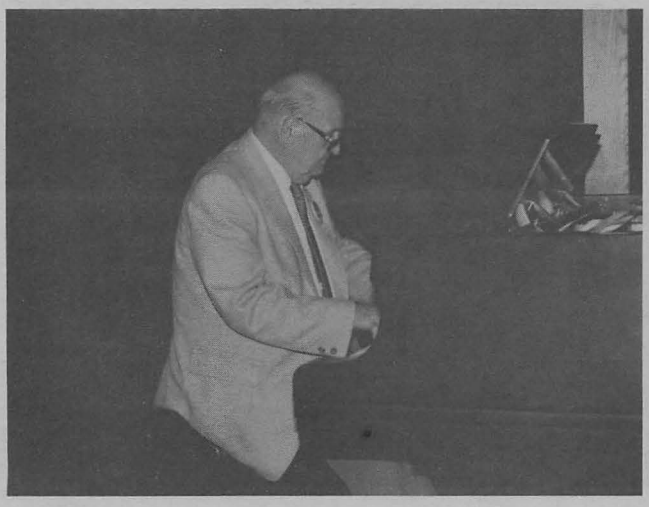
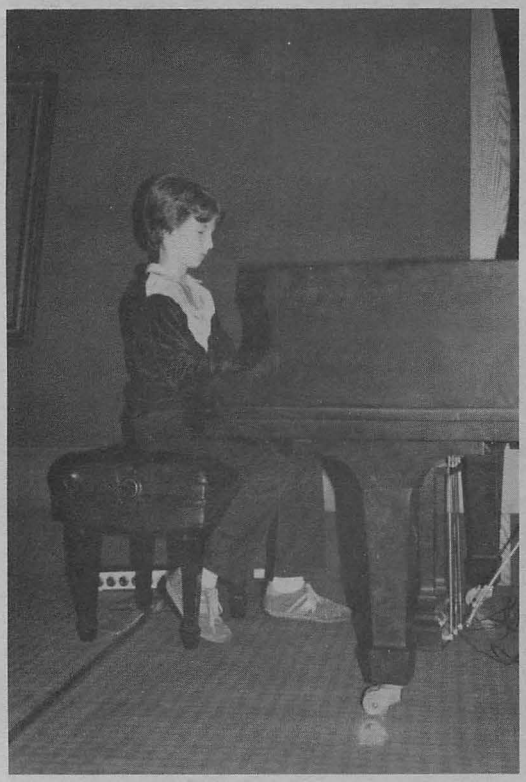


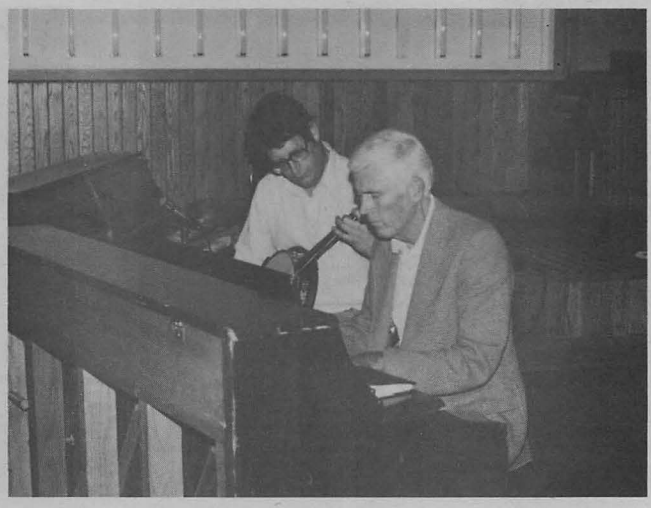
1. The 'Road to Ragtime'
2. JOHN ARPIN (Director)
3. WAYNE ADAMS & AUSTIN KITCHEN
4. MIKE MONTGOMERY
5. WILLIE WILSON, WARREN LATHAM & DAN PARR



1. GERRY VONDY
2. REIDE KAISER
3. JACK CUFF
4. GARY TENHUNEN
5. JEREMY FLEMING & BESS FELL
6. GEORGE FOLEY

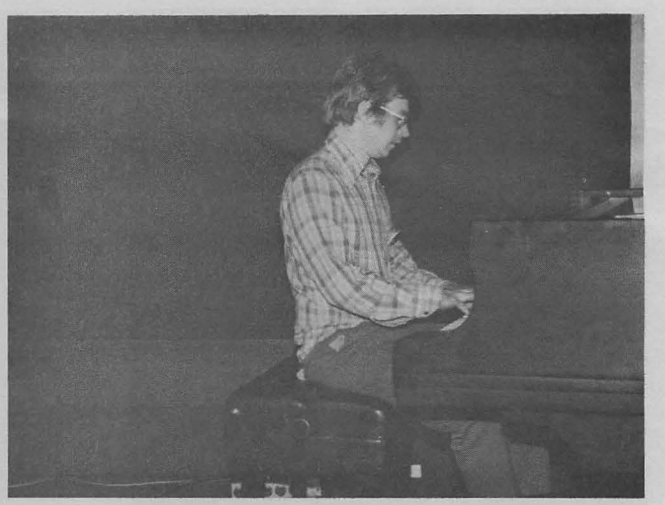


1. DAVE JASEN
2. DANNY MONTGOMERY
3. ELIAS KAUFMAN & AUSTIN KITCHEN
4. PAUL & JEAN HULING
5. MARJ. WITTMANN (Director), AMELIA LAMB & JOE LAMB Jr.

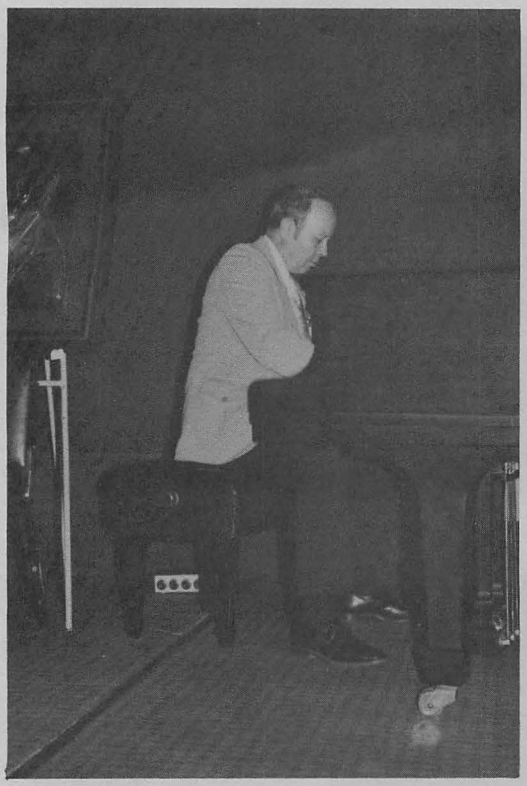


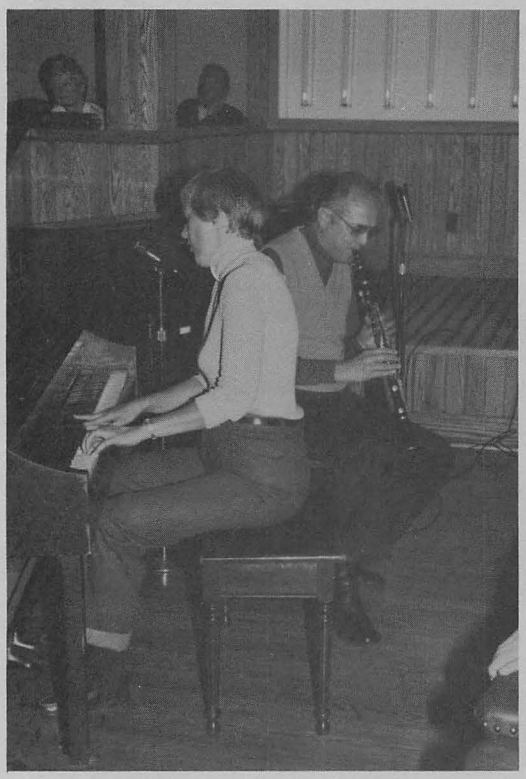
1. ROSEMARY RENAUD
2. JACK HUTTON
3. JOHN ARPIN
4. REIDE KAISER
5. ROBBIE MONTGOMERY
6. JIM MAZZY & JACK PHELAN

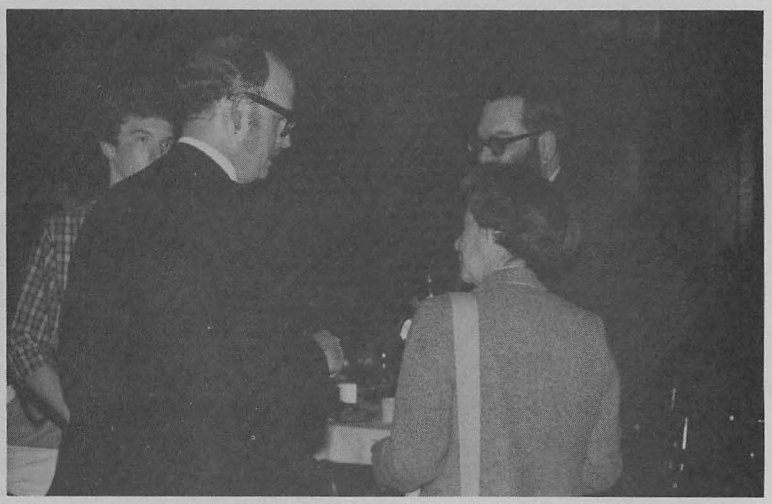
1. MIKE MONTGOMERY
2. GEORGE FOLEY
3. JIM MAZZY & JACK PHELAN
4. AMELIA LAMB, et al.
5. WALT GOWER & KERRY PRICE GOWER



1. GLORIA EKROM
2. BESS FELL
3. DAVE JASEN
4. BOB KIVIAHO
5. DANNY MONTGOMERY
6. GERRY VONDY







1. CHARLES BOOTY
2. KERRY PRICE GOWER & WALT GOWER
3. BILL McCROSTIE (Director)
4. RAINBOW GARDEN ORCHESTRA
5. MIKE MONTGOMERY, GLORIA EKROM & DAVE JASEN

1. JOHN ARPIN
2. BESS FELL
3. PAUL & JEAN HULING
4. HELENA BOWKUN
5. AUSTIN KITCHEN
6. EUBIE BLAKE 'Portrait'

Sheet Music Review by

TEX WYNDHAM

"The Dream Rags", by William Albright (1980), 24 pages. A suite of three piano solos --Sleepwalker's Shuffle, The Nightmare Fantasy Rag (A Night On Rag Mountain), Morning Reveries -- published @ $6.00 by Edward B. Marks Music Corporation, 1790 Broadway, New York, New York 10019. Distributed by Belwin Mills Publishing Corp., Melville, New York 11747.

William Albright functions actively in legitimate contemporary music as well as ragtime, bringing both worlds together in this trio of rag-permeated compositions incorporating keys, sudden meter changes, musical directions and other devides from the more serious repertoire that will be all but unheard of to a pianist who's worked exclusively with ragtime and stride. The pieces call for very advanced technique, compared to normal ragtime standards, with the slow, flowing "Morning Reveries" noticeably less demanding (vs. the first two) and significantly more accessible to ragtimers (having a smaller proportion of strange-sounding note clusters and odd harmonies). The 15-page "The Nightmare Fantasy Rag" is the collection's showpiece, a phantasmagoria of boogie-blues, novelty, one-step, rent-party, "classic ragtime", and you-name-it, welded together via non-rag transitional passages, all of it cast in a slightly distorted and feverish, but also slyly humorous, vein; several of its individual themes are quite good in stretching to the limit, but not breaking the traditional piano style which they principally reflect. An ambitious work, hardly designed for casual performance, but of decided interest.

* * *

"The Radiant Rag: A Cakewalk Two-Step", by John Hasse (1981), 3 pages. Published @ $2.00 plus 60¢ postage (20¢ for each additional copy) by Sunflower Press, P.O. Box 2025, Bloomington, Indiana 47402.

By contrast with the foregoing, Hasse's cheerful four-strain opus (in C and F) is a jaunty, middle-of-the road rag with a certain amount of down-home snap. Any tickler with a working familiarity with ragtime should be able to get comfortable with it fairly quickly, especially the 3rd and 4th strains which have a significant amount of single-note melody. No particular attempt is made at plowing new ground, though the attractive two-hand effect that opens the second strain is something you don't see every day, nor is any particular attempt made to tie together the raggedy strains or to build tension as you go; instead, "Radiant Rag" harks back to ragtime's early days, when rags were loosely-woven aggregations of consecutive syncopations. A pleasant and enjoyable enough product within its self-imposed limits.

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Book Review

RAGTIME: A MUSICAL and CULTURAL HISTORY
By EDWARD A. BERLIN

(University of California Press, 248 pp. $16.95)

Ragtime
A Musical and Cultural History

Edward A. Berlin

THERE WAS RAGTIME BEFORE THE 'STING'

by Joseph McLellan

(Reprinted from The Washington Post, September 12, 1980)

At our present level of musical enlightenment, everyone knows what ragtime is. It is Gunther Schuller conducting a group of student virtuosos as though he were John Philip Sousa having a bit of fun at the local pub; Max Morath playing Joplin on the piano as though the music had originally been written for a banjo. Above all, perhaps, it is the soundtrack of "The Sting", which may have gotten an unearned Oscar for Marvin Hamlisch but also made Scott Joplin's name, very belatedly, a household word.

To the purist, ragtime is something rather more restricted; it is classical piano music, composed by Joplin, Artie Matthews, Joseph Lamb and a few others. It may be based on some rather regrettable 19th-century song and dance forms, as Chopin's mazurkas and polonaises were based on Polish popular music, but in its classic state it has nothing to do with singing or dancing. The epitome of purist ragtime is Joshua Rifkin playing Joplin exactly as it is written - with particular attention to the often-repeated instruction, "Not too fast". The experience is as decorous as it is melodious - and as far as we can tell, it was the way Joplin wanted it done, though it is certainly not the only way it can be done.

Some segment or combination of the elements above has become the standard idea of ragtime music since it became a hot musical commodity in the "second ragtime revival". These descriptions may in fact cover the best and most permanent aspects of ragtime, but as Edward A. Berlin documents in great detail, they are only a small part of what people were calling "ragtime" during the ragtime era. In this feverish quarter-century (roughly from 1895 until 1920), ragtime conquered the field of popular music, first in the United States and later in Europe; it inspired classical composers as varied as Debussy and Stravinsky. The public took it to its bosom and, as usually happens when millions of people are enjoying something, talking about it, writing about it and (perhaps

most important of all) buying it, things got muddled. When a title is good for sales, it is likely to be used without too much care for fine distinctions.

During the ragtime era, the name was used mostly for vocal music - and often for vocal music that imposed hideous racial stereotypes on the black people who were the inventors of ragtime. Ragtime was confused with foxtrots and cakewalks and polkas and even waltzes, and perhaps more understandably with the later-emerging, related but distinct forms of blues and jazz. The name was applied to the music of men such as Irving Berlin, who was a fine composer but not a ragtime composer.

There is a certain richness, as well as a certain confusion, in the jumble that went under the name of "ragtime" when the name was new and imperfectly understood. Berlin, who has a doctorate in musicology, manages to preserve the richness while sorting out the confusion in a work that often reads like a spruced-up doctoral dissertation but manages always to preserve lucidity, even when style is sacrificed to thoroughness and precision. Besides reading and analyzing an appalling quantity of sheet music, most of which was inevitably mediocre, he has examined exhaustively the printed and recorded information on how ragtime was discussed, promoted and performed during the ragtime era. After reading his book, one may feel free to go back to the emotional conviction that real ragtime is Scott Joplin played by Josua Rifkin - but it will be done with an awareness considerably expanded by the reading.

The latter portion of Berlin's book, where he examines the varieties of syncopation, the formal structures of ragtime piano compositions, the stylistic development and decline of the art in its 25-year heyday, will be of interest primarily to specialists.

For the general reader, there is considerably more interest in the earlier section, where he examines the cultural background and ventures into types of music that are practically forgotten now but were intimately associated with ragtime before it became a classical form. The first printed sheet music that can be identified as ragtime in style occurs actually in the accompaniment of a "coon song," a genre happily long out of style whose content was precisely what its generic title would indicate. Even the names of most coon songs tend to be offensive to modern sensibilities (probably the best known was "All Coons Look Alike to Me"), and Berlin's summary of the usual content of these songs (some of which were the works of black composers struggling in a white market) is eloquent in a scholarly sort of way: "Generally, the themes of coon-song lyrics can be summarized as: violence (especially with a razor), dishonesty, greed, gambling, shiftlessness, cowardliness and sexual promiscuity."

An effort was made, through the years, to evolve the coon song into something with more positive ethnic overtones - James Weldon Johnson played a significant role with lyrics such as those of "Under the Bamboo Tree." The story of the development from gross caricature into songs such as "Everybody Calls Me Honey," "Darktown Strutters' Ball" and the kind of music associated with Al Jolson and Bert Williams would make an interesting book in its own right, but that is another story.

Berlin also chronicles the controversies that raged around ragtime as it became popular - controversies that involved the quality of the music, the question

of whether it should be identified as "American," whether it could be part of the root system for a distinctively American classical music, and (symptomatically) whether credit for inventing it could be given to any group as low-down and shiftless as American blacks. One of the most interesting cultural notes in his two-pronged book actually occurs deep in the musicological section, where he reprints a series of sheet-music covers showing the changing image of ragtime as it became "respectable." The genre begins with plantation-style caricatures on its covers, modulates into the "Peaches and Cream" rag (1905) with a beautiful young woman (white, naturally) on its cover and reaches some kind of climax with the "Encore Rag" (1912), whose cover shows ragtime being played in an all-white salon setting, with the men in white tie and the women in formal dresses.

In one dimension which Berlin sketches and partially fills in, the story of ragtime is the story of America's assimilation of one of the most vigorous and creative elements of our population into our cultural mainstream; it impinges on the story of how a new American identity, distinct from our partially Euorpean origins, was forged and is still being forged. That assimilation is still incomplete. Some predominantly black television situation comedies might be analyzed as the latest successors to the coon-song tradition, and their content compared with that of the coon songs as an index of how far we have come. Another index is the way ragtime music is regarded today, compared with the attitudes that surrounded its origins. By providing the material for such a comparison, Berlin has given us a handle on how far we have come and how far we still have to go.

****

ALEXANDER (Ragtime) READ

Alexander (Ragtime) Read, a nationally-known ragtime and dixieland piano player died on Saturday, November 22, 1980 in Mississauga Hospital at 57.

Born in Niagara Falls, Ont., he was graduated from the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto.

He was a disc jockey and entertainer with radio stations in his hometown, Guelph and Hamilton. In the early 1950s he had his own show on CHCH-TV in Hamilton called Main Street Jamboree.

Read, who moved to Mississauga in 1960, appeared on many Canadian Broadcasting Corp. radio and television shows and took part in three CBC show tours overseas to entertain Canadian troops.

He entertained in hotels and clubs throughout Metro and area and made five record albums for the Canadian Talent Library. In recent years he also taught piano.

Variety Rag

Used by Permission of "Variety"

Something Different

Featured by
Edwards, Ryan and Tierney

For Piano

By Harry Austin Tierney

GEO. W. MEYER MUSIC CO.
MUSIC PUBLISHERS
1367 Broadway, New York.